

# USDAnews

USDA's Employee News Publication—For You & About You!

## USDA's FY 2005 Proposed Budget Emphasizes Key Priorities, Programs

by Ron Hall  
Office of Communications

**"T**he 2005 budget is a responsible budget, and it funds key priorities and programs here at USDA by focusing funds on the key areas for USDA—including food and agriculture defense, BSE-related activities, and a record level of support for farm conservation programs, food safety, and nutrition programs."

That was the main message from Secretary **Ann M. Veneman** as she unveiled USDA's proposed budget for FY 2005 at a press conference on February 2. She highlighted several items of importance in the Department's proposed budget, which she said provides unprecedented funding for a food and nutrition 'safety net,' expands agricultural trade, expands housing for rural citizens, invests in America's rural sector, strengthens forest health and firefighting capabilities, and improves USDA's program delivery and customer service.

"As you know, we are in a time of fiscal constraint," she advised, and then emphasized that the Department's budget proposal for FY 2005 "focuses and maintains resources in order to meet our strategic goals."

Highlights of the FY 2005 budget proposal include the following items: safeguarding America's homeland and protecting the food

supply, activities related to Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) or 'mad cow disease,' an unprecedented level of farm bill conservation funding, record funding for a food and nutrition 'safety net,' expanding agricultural trade and supporting international food assistance programs, providing housing opportunities and investment in rural America, healthy forests, improving Departmental services and systems, and civil rights.

Veneman noted that the proposed budget supports the Department's strategic plan and is consistent with the USDA policy book titled "Food and Agricultural Policy: Taking Stock for the New Century," which USDA released in 2001.

USDA's FY 2005 proposed budget calls for nearly \$81.8 billion in spending, an increase of more than \$4.0 billion over the Department's currently estimated spending for FY 2004 of over \$77.7 billion

USDA's budget proposes a federal staffing level for FY 2005 of 99,048 full-time equivalent positions, or federal staff years. This is a decrease of 2,621 federal staff years from the currently estimated FY 2004 federal staff year level of 101,669.

Agencies that reflect proposed increases in federal staff years for FY 2005 include the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (an increase of 228 federal staff years, to total 6,534 federal staff years), the Farm Service Agency (100, to total 6,017), the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (82, to total 1,375), the Food and Nutrition

*continued on pg. 2...*



"Just like it says here, principal operators of farms or ranches who are American Indians increased by 19.4 percent from 1997 to 2002," affirms NASS survey statistician **Ginger Harris** (left). She and NASS agricultural statistician **Jorge Garcia-Pratts** are reviewing the contents of preliminary state and national demographic data contained in the 2002 Census of Agriculture document she is holding. Note **Janet Allen's** story on this page concerning how USDA employees made this ag census possible.—**PHOTO BY JANET ALLEN**

## Here's A 'Behind The Scenes' Look At The 2002 Ag Census

*Our First One, From Start To Finish*

by Janet Allen  
NASS Marketing Section staff

**O**n February 3 USDA announced the availability of preliminary state and national demographic data for all 50 states, plus final data for Puerto Rico, from the 2002 Census of Agriculture.

Now here's "the rest of the story" about how USDA employees made it possible.

According to **Jay Johnson**, executive assistant to the administrator of the National Agricultural Statistics Service, the census of agriculture is currently conducted every five years. "The first one was conducted in conjunction with the 1840 population census," he noted.

Its purpose, he added, is to gather facts about farms and ranches in every county in the nation—to provide a complete statistical portrait of local and national agriculture.

"The census of agriculture is NASS's largest information-gathering project for agriculture," Johnson affirmed.

**Kent Hoover**, chief of NASS's Census Planning Branch, said that the 1997 Census of Agriculture—the most recent agriculture census until now—was conducted as a joint effort between NASS and the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

"The Census Bureau started with the planning for the 1997 Census of Agriculture and then that mission was transferred to USDA," he explained. "The 1997 ag census was then conducted and completed by NASS." The March 1997 issue of the **USDA News** carried a

*continued on pg. 7...*



# Ann M. Veneman

## Secretary of Agriculture

In his February 2002 budget submission to Congress, President **George W. Bush** outlined a management agenda for making government more focused on citizens and results, which includes expanding 'Electronic Government'—or 'eGovernment.' eGovernment uses improved Internet-based technology to make it easier for citizens and businesses to interact with the government, save taxpayer dollars, and streamline citizen-to-government communications.

USDA has been working hard to focus our technology efforts so that this Department of roughly 110,000 employees runs much more efficiently and is more responsive to the needs of American agriculture.

**Scott Charbo**, USDA's Chief Information Officer, has coordinated our efforts across the Department. And we are starting to see tangible results. For instance, you have probably noticed a new look to the USDA website, **www.usda.gov**. This is the first phase in efforts to make the website more powerful and improve access to USDA information and science. The new look will be followed by improved functionality. We will continue adding features for users, culminating in August with the launch of 'MyUSDA.gov' to provide a customized version of the USDA homepage for individual users based on their unique needs.

Other features include a "customer statement" to put a whole range of USDA services and programs into a single report at the fingertips of agricul-

tural producers. For instance, farmers will be able to view their contracts in various conservation programs, payments under commodity programs, and information on loans and crop insurance. Farmers and ranchers will even be able to cross-reference that data with interactive maps of their operations using geographic information systems—or GIS—technology with overlays for roads, soil types, water, and other geographic features.

Producers will have quick and easy access in a single gateway to the volumes and volumes of maps and geospatial data generated by USDA. Instead of traveling to a county office, farmers and ranchers will be able to log on from a computer to apply for loan deficiency payments over the Internet.

To support these new programs, USDA is making several changes to upgrade systems behind the scenes, including: high-speed networks nationwide to increase data capacity to meet the Department's increasing needs; a web authentication, or privacy, system to allow customers to access information and submit forms securely; improved e-mail service for employees; a content management system to improve the ability to update websites and other information; and, this year, USDA will put into place a cutting-edge tracking system to better manage civil rights cases and data.

I appreciate all the efforts throughout the Department to get us where we are today. If we continue to work together, we will provide better service to our customers and provide you, our employees, with the tools you need to do your job. ■

### FY 2005 Proposed Budget...continued from pg. 1

Service (77, to total 1,749), the Food Safety and Inspection Service (72, to total 9,900), the Risk Management Agency (30, to total 598), and the Office of the General Counsel (15, to total 353).

Agencies with proposed decreases in federal staff years include the Natural Resources Conservation Service (a decrease of 2,032 federal staff years, to total 11,538 federal staff years) and the Forest Service (1,217, to total 34,883). Regarding the federal staff year figure for NRCS, the decrease is caused primarily by the elimination of funding earmarked by the Congress for specific projects, and also because funds are not proposed for NRCS's Emergency Watershed Protection Program for 2005.

In addition, the temporary full-time non-federal county staff years of FSA are projected to decrease by 1,067—since the workload associated with implementing the commodity and farm income provisions of the farm bill is expected to continue to decline—for a total of 10,284 non-federal staff years for FY 2005.

These federal staff year estimates are all subject to adjustments to reflect the final outcome of budget negotiations, and such unpredictable factors as natural disasters and other emergencies.

*Highlights of USDA's FY 2005 budget proposal, thought to be of particular interest to employees, include:*

- \$137 million—an increase of \$18 million—to upgrade technology in county office service centers. This provides for the continued replacement of aging business and technology systems with a Common Computing Environment

(CCE) in those offices. That will allow the service center agencies (Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Rural Development) to share data among themselves and their customers and to streamline business processes. Implementation of the CCE began in 1998 and most of its major hardware and software components are in place. This item also includes the continued incorporation of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data into the Department's agricultural digital mapping project—which makes possible the electronic analysis of soils and land-use data. This analysis, which previously took days or weeks of mapping by hand, now takes only minutes through GIS—and customers will be able to access this USDA information about their land over the Internet, rather than by visiting an agency office. This is all designed to increase the ability of USDA customers to interact with USDA staffers over the Internet, so as to save time and money.

- increased funding of \$5.6 million, in the Office of the Chief Information Officer, to improve the Department's cyber security—through certifying and accrediting USDA systems, improving a Departmentwide Information Survivability program to minimize disruptions caused by malicious intrusions or national catastrophes, and implementing an automated risk management system—and to establish a Security Operations Center.

- \$22 million—an increase of \$4 million—on efforts to strengthen civil rights and equal treatment under USDA programs. This includes an increase of \$2 million to process allegations of discrimination in a more timely manner, plus

an increase of \$1 million to improve tracking and analysis of allegations of discrimination.

- \$381 million for a new "Food and Agriculture Defense Initiative" to: enhance monitoring and surveillance of pests and diseases in plants and animals, conduct research on emerging animal diseases, increase the availability of vaccines for animals, establish a system to track select disease agents of plants, expand the unified Federal-State Diagnostic Network to all 50 states, and complete the National Centers for Animal Health in Ames, Iowa.

For more details on USDA's proposed staffing levels, as well as additional details on other aspects of USDA's proposed budget for FY 2005, click on **www.usda.gov/budget**

USDA's proposed budget for FY 2005 was transmitted to Congress on February 2. ■



"Let's see how these workloads shift as we're processing the 2002 Census of Agriculture," notes **Janet Allen** (right), head of NASS's Marketing Section, as she and NASS statistical assistants **Vivian Howard** (left) and **Sheila Hall** confer on staff resource allocations in support of the latest ag census. Note **Janet Allen's** story on page 1.—**PHOTO BY RON HALL**

# Notes *from USDA Headquarters*

*As the New Year began, the investigation of a BSE-positive cow slaughtered in Washington State in December overshadowed nearly all other events. Countless numbers of employees returned to work, canceling long-held vacation plans, all in order to reassure the public of the safety of America's food supply. While daily briefings and updates were held until the investigation's conclusion on February 9, Secretary Ann M. Veneman also launched USDA's new website, unveiled President George W. Bush's proposed FY 2005 budget for USDA, celebrated the 75th birthday of Dr.*

*Martin Luther King Jr. and Black History Month, and spelled out USDA's intention to focus on America's obesity crisis in the months ahead.*

## **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.:**

Secretary Veneman and USDA employees observed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s actual 75th birthday on January 15. Here are excerpts of the Secretary's speech: "Today we remember a man who contributed so much to Black History and who also changed world history.

"In 2001, the Harris polling company asked Americans who their heroes were. Out of all the public figures in human history, Martin Luther King Jr. ranked second, behind **Jesus Christ**.

"Dr. King lived the qualities he preached. They are qualities that too often are in short supply in our world: the qualities of equality, justice, courage, compassion, non-violence, and love.

"Dr. King lived a life of service, guided by a verse that he often quoted from the Book of Mark: 'Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your servant and whosoever among you will be the first, shall be the servant of all.' He reminded us time after time that everyone can serve in some way,

no matter our background or our station in life.

"It is one of the many ideals of Dr. King that deserve celebration, not just on his birthday but every day, and not just in this country, but all around the world. In fact, according to the King Center in Atlanta, there will be programs commemorating the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. in more than 100 nations. President Bush has said: 'There is still a need for us to hear the words of Martin Luther King, to make sure the hope of America extends its reach into every neighborhood across this land.'"

## **Top Agricultural Research Service Scientists Named:**

Secretary Veneman named **Nelson Cox**, a USDA microbiologist at Athens, Ga., as the Agricultural Research Service Distinguished Senior Research Scientist of the Year for 2003. The announcement was made January 22.

Cox, based at ARS's Poultry Microbiological Safety Research Unit in Athens, is being honored for poultry research accomplishments including developing technology to reduce foodborne pathogens in broiler chickens.

"During his 32-year career with ARS, Dr. Cox's innovative research had helped to improve the safety of poultry that has benefited both consumers and the poultry industry," Veneman said.

For information about other ARS scientists who were also recognized go to: [www.usda.gov/Newsroom/0032.04.html](http://www.usda.gov/Newsroom/0032.04.html)

## **National Food Check-Out Day:**

In 2004, the 37th day of the year fell on February 5, National Food Check-Out Day. Secretary Veneman issued a proclamation reminding Americans that the average consumer earns enough income to pay for all the food consumed in one year in only 37 calendar days.



Secretary Ann M. Veneman (center) and Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Vernon Parker (left) show their appreciation to Okianer Christian Dark, a professor of law at Howard University in Washington, DC, for her keynote address at USDA headquarters in observance of Black History Month—**PHOTO BY ALICE WELCH**

## **80th Annual Agricultural Outlook Forum:**

Nearly 1,400 people gathered to hear what USDA experts had to say about subjects ranging from trade to farm programs to nutrition to conservation. Secretary Veneman's keynote address focused on "Ensuring a Healthy Food Supply" because of the increasing focus on diet and health issues in America, and the potential impact of these trends on the food system.

"We cannot address these topics without discussing overweight and obesity, which are reaching crisis proportions, not only in the United States, but in countries all around the world," she said. Citing figures from the Centers for Disease Control, Veneman said that the cost of treating health ailments linked to obesity cost our economy \$117 billion in the year 2000—\$61 billion in direct medical costs and \$56 billion in lost productivity.

Despite advances in consumer education like the Dietary Guidelines, the Food Guide Pyramid, and mandatory nutrition labeling—to say nothing of the

multitude of diet books on the market—"Americans have grown fatter," she said.

"We have seen over the last 20 years that many Americans have made changes to match what they believe is consistent with good dietary advice: increase consumption of fruits, vegetables, and grains, and decrease consumption of fats and cholesterol.

"Despite those good intentions, what Americans have actually done, according to a recent Centers for Disease Control report, is to increase their intake of calories," Veneman said.

With the food guidance symbol under review and the new Dietary Guidelines set for release in 2005, USDA aims to help Americans understand how they can make changes in their own diets to obtain better health, including a healthy weight.

To that end the Secretary announced that USDA will host a scientific conference in October with other federal agencies as partners, to specifically examine obesity prevention.

—**PATRICIA KLINTBERG**

# Employees *make these things happen*

## Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services

### We're Providing School Supplies To Students In Sierra Leone

During a recent trip to consult with the Sierra Leone government in order to set up nutrition assistance programs, Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services **Eric Bost** had an opportunity to visit a school in Freetown in that country. While visiting the school, he saw many children sharing



*"Kids need people to encourage them—and I think that these school supplies just might be the tools that those students need," affirms **Sara Jones** (right), secretary to the deputy regional administrator of FNS's Southeast Regional Office in Atlanta. She and **Jane Monahan** (left), director of the WIC Program for that office, were among the participants who provided composition books and pencils—at their own expense—that they then shipped out on behalf of students at a primary school in Sierra Leone—***PHOTO BY STEVE WATSON**

school supplies. He watched as four children passed one pencil and one pad of paper between them as they worked on their class assignments.

This gave him an idea. After witnessing this, Bost immediately made a commitment to the head teacher to provide each of the 1,100 students, at the primary school he visited, with a composition book and a pencil. A primary school is equivalent to an American Kindergarten through grade 12 school.

Upon his return to the U.S., Bost shared his experience and goal with the senior leadership in the Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services mission area. FNCS employees heard about the goal and asked how they could help.

Soon employees at the headquarters office in Alexandria, Va., and regional offices all joined forces to collect the 1,100 composition books and pencils.

For instance, at the Food and Nutrition Service's Southeast Regional Office in Atlanta, employees coordinated this particular drive with their other donation activities. "We set up a 'composition book and pencil drop-box,' in addition to our food and clothing drive for the homeless,

plus other drives we were working on for our troops in Iraq," explained **Margo Hester**, that office's human resources liaison. "By doing it in this fashion we gave everyone the option to participate in a charitable activity of their choice."

**Monique Hatten**, human resources liaison at FNS's Mid-Atlantic Regional Office in Robbinsville, N.J., explained that, "An e-mail was sent to all staff asking for their support. I answered the questions and collected the materials as they were turned in."

At one point, she said, the composition books were hard to find, and employees tried looking in various stores and searching on the Internet. "Then, one of our employees found a way that we could order the composition books directly from the company," Hatten noted.

**Lois Jarema**, a supply technician with FNS's Northeast Regional Office in Boston, emphasized that, "The one thing that mattered the most to me about this donation drive was that it was all about the kids."

At FNCS's headquarters office employees collected composition books and pencils and also coordinated the gathering of donations

from the participating regional and headquarters offices. "Our game plan was to compile all of the notebooks and pencils in one place so that we could send them out in a single shipment," affirmed Bost.

**Teronica Nixon**, administrative assistant in the Office of the FNS Administrator, explained that once all the school supplies were received, work began with the U.S. Embassy in Sierra Leone to arrange shipping of the materials and to assure that no USDA funds were to be used in the shipping process. "The process has been somewhat complicated, but our goal to meet Mr. Bost's commitment has guided us to making sure this is done effectively and efficiently," she advised.

According to FNS Associate Administrator for Regional Operations **Jerome Lindsay**, Sierra Leone spends the equivalent of \$1 per child per year on education.

"This initiative may not have a dramatic impact on Sierra Leone's education system," he observed. "But at least in this one school, it will."

"Monumental changes begin with small steps."

—**MARCUS BROWNRIGG**

## Rural Development

### Temporary Farm Worker Program Eases The Burden, With RD's Help

If you own or operate a dairy farm in Vermont, you know that getting a day off is next to impossible. But a Rural Development specialist in the state is helping to ease that burden and give you a break—literally.

He helped to set up a temporary service of trained farmhands to provide temporary labor—and thereby let farmers take some time off.

According to **Mike Dolce**, a business program and cooperative specialist based at the RD local office in Rutland, Vt., the idea originated with **Rick LaVitre**, an Extension dairy specialist at the University of Vermont. "Rick was visiting Ireland," Dolce recounted, "and was introduced to what is called the Irish Farm Relief Service. Rick thought that a similar service, modified to accommodate American agricultural practices, was needed in Vermont."

Dolce and LaVitre subsequently teamed up to make that happen. "When Rick approached me on this project, I immediately recognized the need for this type of temp service, and knew that, in Rural Development, we could be instrumental in pulling it all together," said Dolce. "I was in the position to facilitate the process and to provide funding and technical assistance."

Accordingly, the two worked with a small group of farmers to assess the need and feasibility of such a service. They had surveys sent to farmers throughout the state.

The results confirmed their belief: a service that could provide temporary farm labor was needed—and would be supported and used. "We ultimately determined," Dolce said, "that, with the right type of startup assistance, a farmer-owned and governed organization could ultimately take it from there and operate it independently as a sustainable service."

Startup funding for a pilot program in selected counties—called the 'Vermont Farm Labor Service Cooperative'—came from a \$22,000 Rural Business Opportunity Grant from Rural Development, a \$59,000 grant from the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, and \$25,000 from the Vermont Legislature.

RD—in the form of Dolce—was there to help the co-op incorporate. He also assisted in the development of its bylaws and board policies, assisted with membership development, and served as an advisor at its monthly board meetings.

"For a one-time membership fee of \$50 a farmer can join the cooperative and use this service to find temporary help—that is trained and experienced in what is needed to tackle chores on a farm, plus be well-versed in modern farm technologies, and who can step in at a moment's notice—and all with no supervi-

*continued on pg. 5...*

# Editor's Roundup *USDA's people in the news*



**Ken Roberts** is the associate administrator of the Foreign Agricultural Service.

From July 1996 until his selection for this position Roberts served as FAS's minister-counselor for agricultural affairs at the U.S. Mission to the World Trade Organization in Geneva, Switzerland. In that position he represented U.S. multilateral interests in the WTO and bilateral agricultural concerns with Switzerland.

Roberts was FAS's deputy assistant administrator for international trade policy from 1994-96, after having served as director of the agency's Western Europe and Inter-Americas Division from 1991-94. During the 1980s he served in several managerial and staff positions with FAS in the areas of commodity marketing programs and export credits. From 1983-88 he was the assistant agricultural attaché for FAS in London.

Roberts began his career with FAS in 1980 as an agricultural economist in the Office of the General Sales Manager. He worked as a Peace Corps volunteer in Paraguay from 1977-79, concentrating on special development projects with the Paraguayan Ministry of Agriculture.

**Patrick Steel**, the previous associate administrator of FAS, is now a senior vice president at Freedman, Billings, Ramsey & Co., Inc., an investment bank headquartered in Arlington, Va. ■



**Verle Lanier** is the associate administrator for operations and management in the Farm Service Agency.

Before rejoining USDA, from January 2001 until his appointment to this position Lanier worked as a personnel assistant in the White House Office of Personnel. Previously, he had retired from the federal government in 1994 following a 32-year federal career. From 1992 until he retired in 1994 he had served as the agricultural counselor for the Foreign Agricultural Service in The Hague, the Netherlands. He spent a total of 15 years overseas as an agricultural counselor with FAS in embassies in five different countries.

Lanier served as the assistant deputy administrator of export credits for FAS from 1978-80. From 1964-66 he worked as an assistant to the administrator for USDA's [then] International Agricultural Development Service. Then from 1966-68 he served in that agency as USDA's Vietnam Officer, tasked to send 86 USDA technicians from five USDA agencies to [then] South Vietnam, where their mission was to assist in the transfer of agricultural technology to the South Vietnam Ministry of Agriculture. He began his federal career in 1962 as an agricultural program assistant for the U.S. Agency for International Development in [then] Saigon, South Vietnam.

**George Arredondo**, the previous associate administrator for operations and management in FSA, is now the county executive director for FSA in Maricopa County, Ariz. ■



**Glenn Haggstrom** is the deputy director of USDA's Office of Procurement and Property Management.

Before joining USDA, from 1974-2002 Haggstrom served as a Civil Engineer Officer in the U.S. Air Force. At his most recent assignment, before retiring as a Colonel in December 2002, he was based for four years at Ramstein AB, Germany, where he served as the civil engineer for the U.S. Air Forces in Europe.

This position was created when USDA's assistant secretary for administration transferred the responsibilities for continuity of operations planning, physical security assessments, personnel and document security, and hazardous materials management to OPPM, effective in September 2002. ■



**Bill Smith** is the assistant administrator of the Office of Field Operations in the Food Safety and Inspection Service.

From June 2001 until his selection for this position Smith served as

FSIS's associate deputy administrator for field operations. From 1999-2001 he was the [then] assistant deputy administrator for district inspection operations for FSIS, after having been [then] executive director for district inspection operations from 1994-99.

Smith served as deputy regional director, and subsequently as acting regional director, of FSIS's Northeast Region in Philadelphia from 1993-94. From 1990-92 he was director of FSIS's [then] Processed Products Inspection Division in Washington, DC. He worked as a regional quality control specialist in the agency's Northeast Region from 1984-86, after having begun his career with the agency in 1976 as a food inspector in Lancaster, Pa.

**Mark Mina**, the previous assistant administrator of the Office of Field Operations in FSIS, retired from that position following over 30 years of service with the agency. ■



**Mary McPhail Gray** is the deputy administrator for families, 4-H, and nutrition in

the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service.

Before joining USDA, from October 1997 until her selection for this position Gray served as the associate director for cooperative extension at Colorado State University. She served from 1994-97 at Kansas State University as the assistant extension director for

*continued on pg. 6...*

*...continued from pg. 4*

sion," Dolce explained.

The co-op currently charges a going rate, for the services of the temporary farm laborers, of about \$15 to \$25 per hour. "The rate is based on the degree of skills needed from the temporary worker," Dolce clarified.

"We worked with University of Vermont Extension and the Board of the Vermont Farm Labor Service Cooperative to get this pilot project off the ground," said RD's Vermont State Director **Jolinda LaClair**. "This program supports RD's emphasis on assisting small farms and strengthening the Vermont farm economy."

Dolce acknowledged that similar programs do exist, in some places in the country, in which groups in the private sector offer temporary labor to farmers. "But this is an effort by farmers in the U.S. to collectively address a common labor problem shared by most farmers—and to do so in a proactive manner under a farmer-owned and controlled cooperative structure."

"And to my knowledge," he affirmed, "this particular initiative, involving Rural Development helping to create a farmer-owned co-op which offers temporary labor to both dairy and non-dairy farmers, is the only one existing in the U.S."

The program is now no longer a pilot, and

both RD and University of Vermont Extension currently offer less hands-on assistance and instead play more of an advisory role to the co-op. Future goals include having branch offices across the state, working with the Vermont Department of Employment and Training.

"Without question, substantial challenges still confront the cooperative in bringing it to the next level—which is to develop a sustainable service cooperative for the long haul," Dolce advised.

"But I'm confident that the co-op members will meet the task before them—and I look forward to continuing my work with them."

—CAROLYN LAWRENCE

...continued from pg. 5

family and consumer sciences, and, at the same time, as associate dean of the College of Human Ecology. She was the state leader for 4-H and family and consumer sciences at West Virginia University from 1990-94, after having worked as a state specialist in human development and family science at the University of Missouri-Columbia from 1982-90.

Gray began her Extension career in 1963 as a home economics county agent in Oswego, N.Y., until she joined the Peace Corps, where from 1965-66 she was a volunteer in Jimma, Ethiopia. There she taught home economics at the local high school, and taught business and English at Haile Selassie University Extension.

**Jane Coulter**, the previous deputy administrator for families, 4-H, and nutrition in CSREES, retired from that position following 23 years of service with USDA. ■



**Linda Goodman** is the regional forester of the Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Region, headquartered in Portland, Ore.

From July 2002 until her selection for this position Goodman served as the acting regional forester of the

Pacific Northwest Region, after having been its deputy regional forester since August 1999. During that period of time, from Oct. 2001 to June 2002 she also served as acting chief of staff for the Forest Service at its headquarters office in Washington, DC.

From 1995-99 Goodman was the first director of the 18 Forest Service Job Corps Centers that were [then] newly centralized in Denver, Colo. She began her career with the agency as a clerk-typist, based in Quinault, Wash., on the Olympic National Forest, in 1974.

**Harv Forsgren**, the previous regional forester of FS's Pacific Northwest Region, is now the regional forester of FS's Southwest Region, headquartered in Albuquerque. ■



In the Natural Resources Conservation Service new soil scientists work with more experienced staff to learn the complex landscape interpretations they'll need in order to efficiently map soils, distinguish among soil types, and apply the rules of soil classification. But the

terminology used in that process can be scientific and complicated.

So when **Chanc Vogel** was hired in 1998 as a soil scientist with the agency's Soil Survey Office in Richland Center, Wis., he had to find a way to learn and then use those terms through sign language, since he is hearing impaired. And at that time his supervisor, **Duane Simonson**, had no experience in American Sign Language. Plus, after many inquiries they weren't able to locate any other deaf soil scientists or deaf soil conservationists in the U.S.

Accordingly, Vogel and Simonson, starting from scratch, teamed up to create their own signing for terms they needed to use frequently. And Vogel has kept a register of all the new signs they've created.

Vogel, using sign language, explained that, for instance, he and Simonson express the term "glauconitic rock" through two signs: "green" plus "rock." "That's because glauconitic rock is a sedimentary rock with light greenish streaks laid down through it," he said.

As another example, for the term "water table" they make a "w" to the chin, for "water," and then raise the other hand flat up to infer the level of the water.

Simonson added that, as he and Vogel map soils from one topogra-

phy to another, they continually find they need new signs. "We recently added 'colluvium,' which refers to soil and rock that have been moved down a slope," he noted. "The new sign we created is the sign for the letter 'C,' with a flowing hand motion over the other arm like the letter 'C' is rolling downhill."

They sometimes adapt a sign for another word—but used in context its 'new' meaning is clear. For example, the sign for "clay" uses a motion of both hands to make what looks like a snowball, since clay soil has a clumping property. But that same sign is used for "hamburger." However, the context makes all the difference: time for lunch or type of soil.

Simonson said that signing while at a field location is actually very efficient. "We can communicate as long as we're within eyesight—even if distance or noise would make hearing each other impossible," he said.

According to Vogel, American Sign Language does not officially record signs in its dictionary that are specific to a technical or scientific field. "That's where the register of all the new signs we have created is valuable," he pointed out.

In fact, to date Vogel's register includes soil terminology signs for over 71 words or phrases.

continued on pg. 7...

## PROFILE PLUS More About: Bill Hawks



Before **Bill Hawks** became under secretary for marketing and regulatory programs he spent most of his career as a full-time farmer growing nearly every commodity you can think of except, perhaps, endive. He learned at his father's knee, growing up on a small dairy farm, near Hernando, Miss., where the family also raised a few pigs and chickens and grew cotton. "We had a very diverse operation," he said.

He used that green thumb to help pay for college, growing fresh vegetables: peas, butter beans, snap beans, and squash. After earning undergraduate and graduate degrees in agricultural economics at Mississippi State University, plans to go on for a Ph.D. were forgotten after Hawks experienced "a life-changing event."

He got married. Then he and his bride started their own dairy, continued growing vegetables, and got a loan from Hawks' father to buy the first tractor. That was in the early 1970s when Hawks also began renting land to grow row crops.

Over time the Hawks operation grew to 12,000 acres in three counties in northern Mississippi. Like many farmers, as Hawks' operation expanded so did his involvement with various farm organizations. "It was a natural evolution to move into the political arena," he said. But his service as a Mississippi State Senator from 1994-1999 meant the operation had to be scaled

back to the 7,700 acres of soybeans, wheat, and corn still flourishing today. Still Hawks managed, along the way, to operate and own an agricultural aerial application service as well as a recreational airport and part of a farm management company. "I just never could keep a job," he quipped.

That is until he was tapped to be under secretary for marketing and regulatory programs. "Before coming to Washington, I didn't know really what I would find. The MRP mission area budget was about the same as the general fund budget of the state of Mississippi. But the people, the career people, are dedicated, hard-working, and that is the thing that has made the transition much easier. It's all about the people," he said.

**Last Book Read:** "*The Rising Tide*," (about the Mississippi Delta region) by **John M. Barry**

**Last Movie Seen:** "*Something's Gotta Give*," with **Jack Nicholson** and **Diane Keaton**

**Hobbies:** "Work. Well, I don't play golf and I don't fish, so I'd have to say travel and driving through the countryside."

**Favorite Weekend Breakfast:** Scrambled eggs with cheese, grits, and hot sauce

**Priorities in the Months Ahead:** "I serve at the pleasure of the President of the United States and the President has told us 'to continue to do our job.' We are going to continue to run this mission area—marketing and regulatory programs—as efficiently and as effectively as we can."

—PATRICIA KLINTBERG



They share that ever-expanding list with NRCS colleagues who work with Vogel as well as with sign language interpreters who interpret for Vogel at soils conferences and training sessions. "Our colleagues have been learning these signs pretty quickly because they are often intuitive or descriptive—like the example of 'green' plus 'rock' to describe 'glaucous rock'," Vogel advised.

In addition, Vogel's register of soil terminology signs they have created can serve as a handbook for

any new hearing impaired soil scientist in NRCS, or elsewhere. "In fact," Simonson emphasized, "many of our signs would be useful for anyone working with a hearing impaired person on the land—farmers, ranchers, foresters, and geologists."

"Like all pioneers," Vogel affirmed, "Duane and I had to make our own way through new terrain, improvising as we went—and then leaving a trail for others to follow." ■

—RENAE ANDERSON

NRCS soil scientists **Chanc Vogel** (right) and **Duane Simonson** examine a very thick



layer of "glacial till"—which is unsorted sand, silt, clay, and rocks—that had been deposited on the steep slope they are standing by. As they discuss the texture of the glacial till, Vogel is signing the word "sand." —PHOTO BY RENAE ANDERSON

#### 'Behind the Scenes'...from pg. 1

story about NASS's preparation for that census of agriculture.

"So this means that the 2002 Census of Agriculture was the first time that NASS conducted the census of agriculture from start to finish," Hoover noted.

According to **Steve Sakry**, NASS census administrator, data collection for the 2002 Census of Agriculture began in December 2002 with an initial mailout—from Jeffersonville, Ind.—of almost three million report forms designed to reach all farms and ranches across the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

**Ray Garibay**, NASS's state statistician for Washington, based in Olympia, noted that NASS has the advantage of a network of 46 field offices which have the local presence and knowledge to assist with the collection and review of census information, as well as with public relations.

According to Garibay, 'enumerators'—who are the 'interviewers' for both NASS surveys and the agriculture census—were critical to the census' success. "For the first time, enumerators across America played a key role in publicizing the 2002 Census of Agriculture to local audiences," he explained.

The enumerators worked with farm and non-farm community organizations and businesses to reach their customers and members with the ag census message through such communications tools as posters, ads, articles, and presentations. They also answered over 200,000 calls to NASS's toll-free helpline from farmers and ranchers needing assistance with their ag census report forms, and made follow-up calls and personal visits to producers who had not yet re-

sponded to the ag census by mail.

Garibay clarified that enumerators are actually employees of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture under contract with NASS. "That lends credibility when they ask farmers and ranchers for information," he advised.

Even as late reports were still coming in, staff in every NASS state office across the country began editing and analyzing the reports from agricultural producers to correct anomalies and prepare local and state summaries. Meanwhile, NASS's headquarters personnel in Washington, DC were programming and adjusting the automated systems that process all the numbers and prepare the actual tables for publication. And that all continues in preparation for the final county-level reports due in June 2004.

"We believe the state and national preliminary numbers provide a good basis for our data users to get a 'first look'—or preview—of what's to come," Hoover said. "Now we'll continue focusing on the county-level summaries and all the many detailed statistics available in the complete ag census results."

**Sarah Hoffman**, head of NASS's Environmental and Demographics Section, said that the preliminary state and national demographic data on the 2002 Census of Agriculture include gender, race, and ethnicity of operators, residence on or off the farm, days worked off farm, years present on farm, age group categories, and the number of persons living in each household.

*Preliminary results show that:*

■ The average age of American agricultural producers in 2002

was 55.3 years old. This was one year older than the comparable figure from the 1997 ag census.

■ 27.2 percent of all agricultural producers were women in 2002. This marks the first measurement of all women involved in day-to-day farming and ranching decisions.

■ Principal operators of farms or ranches who are of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin increased by 50.8 percent from 1997 to 2002, with figures of 33,450 in 1997 and 50,443 in 2002.

■ Black principal operators of farms or ranches increased by 8.8 percent (26,785 versus 29,145) from 1997 to 2002, and American Indian principal operators increased by 19.4 percent (12,911 versus 15,417) during that same period.

■ Ninety percent of America's agricultural operations are still run by individuals or families, and most are still small farms. More specifically, the majority of farms and ranches—59 percent—had less than \$10,000 in sales of agricultural products in 2002.

Hoover noted that the final 2002 Census of Agriculture data at the national, state, and county levels are to be released in June 2004.

"That report," he emphasized, "will present first-time facts about organic crop acreage and sales, production contracts, and farm computer and Internet use. It will also provide the broader, full range of traditional census data that includes land use and ownership, acres irrigated, crop acreage and quantities harvested, livestock and poultry inventories, value of products sold, participation in federal farm programs, and the market value of land and buildings."

"So stay tuned," he quipped. ■

The **USDA News** is published by the Office of Communications, the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This employee news publication, which is prepared by, for and about this Department's employees, is distributed to USDA's 105,000 federal employees—full-time, part-time and temporary—by order of the Secretary of Agriculture. Mailing address is Rm. 412-A Whitten Bldg.; OC, USDA; 1400 Independence Ave., SW; Washington, D.C. 20250-1350.

To update your mailing address or change the quantity of **USDA News** copies received in your USDA office, please contact your agency's mailing/distribution specialist.

**Ron Hall**  
**Arabella Juarez**  
**Mary Adams**

Editor  
Art Director  
Printing and  
Distribution  
Coordinator

**Charles Hobbs**

**USDA News** Internet  
Coordinator

**Gayle Turner**

**USDA News** Internet  
Assistant

The **USDA News** is also available on USDA's Home Page within the Internet. Use the World Wide Web to access that Home Page version. Simply type the Home Page address—or Universal Resource Locator (URL)—of the **USDA News**, which is

<http://www.usda.gov/news/pubs/newslett/cover.htm>

In addition, USDA employees may access the Department's Intranet for information that is internal to USDA and for its employees only. Employees will need to use a USDA computer, plus a USDA server that permits Intranet access. The Intranet's URL is

<http://www.hqnet.usda.gov/intranet/intranet.htm>

USDA prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

The **USDA News** is printed on paper containing a minimum of 50 percent waste paper. The **USDA News** is recyclable.



"So, how does it feel, guys, participating in what's probably the only program like this in the country?" quips **Mike Dolce** (right), a business program and cooperative specialist based at the Rural Development local office in Rutland, Vt. He is referring to a program in which RD helped to create a farmer-owned co-op that offers temporary labor to farmers in Vermont—so they can literally take a break. Dolce is standing in the barn at a dairy farm in Cornwall, Vt., where the farm owners are on a weekend camping trip. The co-op provided **Arlyn Foote** (2nd from left), a retired dairy farmer, to take care of the milking, feeding, and breeding chores on the farm while the owners were away. Co-op Manager **Paul Seiler** (left) and Co-op Board President **Bill Goddard** (2nd from right) were also present. Note **Carolyn Lawrence's** story on page 4.



## Help Us Find Teri Smith

Missing: 5-9-2003

D.O.B. 5-16-1987

Hair: Lt. Brown

Height: 5 ft. 10 in.

From: San Angelo, TX

Sex: Female

Eyes: Green

Weight: 200 lbs.

If you have information, please call

**1-800-843-5678**

NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN

## USDA-Sponsored Calendar Highlights

### ■ Month of March

#### *Women's History Month*

USDA headquarters and field offices

(202) 720-7314 or (202) 720-6382 (TTY)

### ■ Month of March

#### *National Nutrition Month*

USDA headquarters and field offices

(703) 305-2298 or 1-800-877-8339 (TTY)

### ■ May 11-14

#### *CYFAR (Children, Youth, & Families at Risk) 2004 Conference*

Seattle, Wash.

(202) 720-5075 or 1-800-877-8339 (TTY)

or [www.reeusda.gov/4h/cyfar/cyfar.htm](http://www.reeusda.gov/4h/cyfar/cyfar.htm)

**U.S. Department of Agriculture**  
**1400 Independence Ave, SW**  
**Washington, DC 20250**



OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300